

REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM

For Reaffirmation of Accreditation

To California State University, San Marcos

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The team evaluated the institution under the 2023 Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective evaluation for consideration and action by the institution and by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). The formal action concerning the institution's status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. This report and the Commission letter are made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.

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Section I – Overview and Context

A. Description of Institution and Accreditation History

California State University, San Marcos (CSUSM) was established as the 20th campus in the California State University system in 1989, after first serving as satellite campus of San Diego State University. In 2009, CSUSM opened an offsite campus in Temecula, about 30 miles north of the main campus. The mission of CSUSM centers on student success. The institution describes itself as an engine of transformative knowledge whose “community of dedicated teacher-scholars and staff holistically advance the academic, social, professional and personal development of students across the student life cycle, through education, innovation and community partnerships.” A notable distinction is that in 2025, CSUSM was ranked second among 1,026 in colleges and universities in the CollegeNet Social Mobility rankings.

CSUSM primarily serves the southern California region, with 75% of students coming from Orange, Riverside and San Diego counties. In Fall 2025, the total CSUSM enrollment was 17,012 students. This includes 15,259 undergraduate, 1,074 graduate, 509 postbaccalaureate, and 170 transitory students. This last group includes dual-enrolled high school students, international exchange students, and students cross-enrolled from other CSUs. The Fall 2025 total represents a 4.8% increase over Fall 2024 enrollment and reflects a nearly complete recovery from a dip during and following the COVID-19 pandemic. The overall growth rate has slowed over the past decade, coinciding with a steady decline in the California college age population since 2016. This decline is projected to persist over the decade to come.

The university is organized into four colleges: the College of Business Administration (CoBA); College of Education, Health and Human Services (CoEHHS); College of Humanities, Arts, Behavioral and Social Sciences (CHABSS), and College of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (CSTEM). Together, they offer 45 bachelor’s degrees, 24 master’s degrees, and 2 doctoral degrees. The last

includes a doctorate in nursing practice (DNP) and an EdD in educational leadership (joint with the University of California, San Diego). For reference, in 2016 the campus offered 44 bachelor's degrees, 14 master's degrees, and one doctorate (EdD).

CSUSM at Temecula offers a BS in business administration, a 2+2 collaborative BS in business administration with Mount San Jacinto Community College, an accelerated BS in nursing, and a BS in software engineering. Through a new partnership with Southwestern College (SWC), CSUSM plans to launch several new degree programs at the SWC Chula Vista location, pending WSCUC substantive change approval. For Fall 2026, these will include new BS degree programs in business administration and cybersecurity. These will be followed in Fall 2027 by bachelor's degree programs in human development with emphasis on wellness coaching, and bilingual speech language pathology. A program in computer information systems is also under consideration.

At present, about 22% of classes are offered in online or hybrid modalities. Seven bachelor's degree programs are offered in a fully online format: RN-BS nursing; criminology and justice studies; sociology; women, gender, and sexuality studies; cybersecurity; speech language pathology; and wildfire science. Six master's degree programs are also fully online: education administration; reading, language, and literacy; public health; social work; cybersecurity; multilingual and multicultural education.

The institution aspires to expand significantly its offerings of graduate/professional and undergraduate degree programs. As of February 2026, proposals for five new bachelor's degrees, two new master's degrees, and one new doctoral degree have been approved at the college level. Two of those proposals are now being considered at the campus level (MS in clinical counseling psychology, MS in business analytics) and one is at the system level (MS in business analytics). Later sections of this report elaborate on plans for further expansion of curricular offerings.

The university received initial accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC, now the WASC Senior College and University Commission, or WSCUC) in 1993. Accreditation was

reaffirmed in 2000, 2009, and in 2016 for ten years. A mid-cycle progress report was reviewed and accepted in 2021. Since 2016, substantive changes were approved related to the BS in electrical engineering (2019) and the creation of the DNP degree in 2024.

B. Description of Team's Review Process

The team reviewed the CSUSM institutional Report for Reaffirmation of Accreditation and the documents to which it linked and referred. These, along with the Federal Compliance forms and the Compliance with the 2023 WSCUC Standards Worksheet, were reviewed and discussed by the team during its offsite review; the team then requested additional information. The institution responded completely and in a timely way by providing the requested data, program review documents, strategic planning metrics, financial statements, and system-level contextual information. These were also reviewed by the team, and they informed the schedule for the accreditation visit. During the visit, the team met with institutional leaders, faculty, staff, and students, and also reviewed information received through the confidential email account. Two team members visited the Temecula facilities. The team chair conferred with the president of CSUSM and the chancellor of the CSU system.

C. Institution's Reaffirmation Report and Update: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence

The institutional report presented a well written, comprehensive narrative about the evolution of the campus, including enrollment trends, program development, and facilities expansion. The evolution of the campus and its current state were positioned in the context of the CSU system and the broader fiscal environment. The report was well documented, evidence-based, and forward-looking. To a significant degree, the report pointed to websites, reports, and other information that substantiated the narrative related to the institution's mission, organizational structures, strategic planning, academic and co-curricular programming, climate, and other dimensions of its plans and aspirations.

The team found that the report clearly articulated the institution's mission and values. Those foundations are reflected in planning and assessment processes and demonstrate the institution's commitment to advancing success for all students and to advancing social mobility. CSUSM has shown resilience and sustained positive trajectory since the last reaffirmation review, particularly in light of significant changes in the campus leadership, the broad and substantial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and system-level budget constraints. Despite these challenges, the institution has been able to add new faculty, academic programs, and facilities. The rationale for these investments was explained, as was their relevance to achieving broader strategic plan goals. The team found that the evidence and data provided by the institution supported the claims in its report, and that the additional information it provided after the team's offsite review addressed the team's questions appropriately.

Section II – Evaluation of Institutional Report

Subsection A: Response to Previous Commission Actions

The 2016 WSCUC Commission Action Letter identified five issues for further development, referencing the criteria for review (CFRs) from the 2013 WSCUC Handbook of Accreditation:

- (1) consider the impact of fiscal and enrollment trends in academic planning for established and new academic programs (*CFRs 2.1, 3.1, and 3.3*);
- (2) build on progress in assessment of student learning and the use of evidence for program improvement and decision making (*CFRs 2.6, 2.7, and 4.2*);
- (3) define student success, and use this definition as the basis for analysis of program effectiveness (*CFRs 2.7 and 2.11*);
- (4) promote conversations and actions that will help the institution realize its commitment to diversity, educational equity, and inclusion (*CFR 1.4*);

- (5) formulate a university-wide strategic plan (*CFR 4.6 and 4.7*).

The institutional report described how the institution has addressed these issues and provides supporting evidence. The CFRs referenced below and throughout the rest of the document are those in the 2023 WSCUC Handbook of Accreditation.

- (1) Having navigated the COVID-19 pandemic and associated enrollment declines, and as one of 22 campuses in the CSU system, the current leadership is keenly aware of fiscal constraints.

Campus organizational structures have been refined, providing a framework for planning and implementation that has greater capacity to be responsive to the dynamic fiscal and enrollment environment in the CSU system and nationwide. The institution employs a collaborative budgeting process that considers the outcomes of program reviews, and that aligns resource allocation decisions with institutional priorities and values (*CFRs 2.5, 3.1 and 3.4*).

- (2) Significant progress has been made in strengthening program assessment. A restructured University Assessment Council guides much of this work and supports a “positive culture of assessment.” Since the 2016 review, Institutional Planning and Analysis (IP&A) partnered with Instructional Information Technology Services (IITS) to develop a repository of historical census data in the campus data warehouse. The campus adopted Tableau data visualization software and built a suite of self-service reports and dashboards to make campus data more useful and accessible to internal and external stakeholders (*CFRs 2.4, 2.9, 3.10 and 4.6*).

- (3) An outcome of the institution-wide strategic planning process was its development of a new, holistic definition of student success:

Students succeed when they achieve their own goals, personal, professional and educational, prepared to thrive in diverse environments as resilient and engaged global citizens. We commit to an expansive and holistic approach grounded in equity and social mobility that looks beyond access, retention and graduation to provide seamless,

equitable, and effective support for all students throughout their life cycle: from the first point of contact, in the classroom and outside it, through graduation, and beyond.

The visiting team used the site visit as an opportunity to learn more about how this definition guides campus priorities for academic and student support programs and initiatives. A focus of the visit was on learning how the campus operationalizes evidence to advance student success through programs and services, all within the broader context of the strategic plan, and also the ways in which they are advancing and assessing post-graduation success (*CFR 2.13 and 2.14*).

- (4) At the time CSUSM submitted its institutional report, the Commission had stayed CFR 1.2 of the 2023 Handbook, and it subsequently, this CFR. Because of these changes, the team did not evaluate the institution's response to recommendation #4.
- (5) CSUSM initiated a strategic planning process in 2021. The outcome was the creation of The Power of CSUSM strategic plan, which centers on the university's commitment to advancing student success and social mobility. The goals are grouped into six thematic areas, each of which has action plans and metrics that are tracked annually, although because of fiscal and enrollment uncertainties (primarily resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic), the institution did not commit to specific goals and timelines. Campus units (e.g., Student Affairs) developed their own strategic plans that feed into the high-level plan, and these, too, are accompanied by action plans and metrics. The Strategic Planning Implementation Leadership Team guides the overall effort (*CFR 4.8*).

Based on the institutional report and supporting documentation, the team identified five lines of inquiry for the CSUSM Accreditation Visit. These centered on strategic plans and initiatives, student success, the culture and practice of assessment, academic program portfolio optimization, and fiscal stability and sustainability.

Subsection B: Institutional Essays

Standard 1 – Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

Institutional purposes (*CFRs 1.1 and 1.2*)

In 2022, CSUSM redefined its vision and mission, which are the foundation of The Power of CSUSM strategic plan (*CFR 1.1*). With a focus on student success, the institution aims to “holistically advance the academic, social, professional and personal development of students across the student life cycle, through education, innovation and community partnerships.” CSUSM takes pride in being a national leader of social mobility that drives intellectual engagement, innovation, and sustainability (*CFRs 1.1, 1.2*). CSUSM has dedicated itself to the values of intellectual engagement, student success, inclusive excellence, culture of care, innovation, community engagement, stewardship of resources, and sustainability and climate justice (*CFR 1.2*). CSUSM is an institution of place that focuses on access for students in the region – including active military, veterans and other adult learners – and on meeting regional workforce needs.

Consistent with its mission and vision, the institution has established organizational and policy frameworks and associated practices that are designed to support success for all students. These frameworks include embedding student and program learning outcomes in degree programs, undertaking regular program reviews, implementing and improving systems to assess and support student progress, creating co-curricular programming that builds community and supports professional development and career readiness, and undertaking institutional research to understand and improve student outcomes. CSUSM’s 2024 Long-range Academic Master Plan (LAMP) maps out critical curricular developments that will create educational opportunities and support student success in the future. The LAMP aims to promote career readiness by increasing access to high-impact practices (such as experiential learning) and by expanding degree program offerings in areas where its bachelor’s, master’s, and professional doctoral degree recipients are expected to be in high demand (*CFR 1.2*).

Integrity and Transparency (*CFRs 1.3 through 1.8*)

CSUSM maintains extensive websites on which information about the campus, admissions, degree programs, program costs and financial aid, student services, organizational units, and academic and student conduct policies can be found. Institutional data are available through both public and limited access dashboards (*CFR 1.3*).

CSUSM has robust policies and procedures that apply to faculty and staff, spanning promotion and tenure, human resources, finance and administration, grievances, and all other aspects of university operations (*CFR 1.4*). Campus policies are communicated effectively, and help to ensure institutional integrity, program quality, and consistency and fairness in personnel actions, student conduct, and other areas (*CFRs 1.3, 1.4, 1.5*). As a member of the CSU system, CSUSM has a strong system of shared governance and a policy on academic freedom that commits CSUSM to standards enunciated by the American Association of University Professors (*CFR 1.6*). The visiting team observed that the faculty and administration engage collaboratively, constructively, and consistently with their respective roles and responsibilities in shared governance.

Multiple communication channels are used to keep the campus and external community informed about news, changes and events (*CFR 1.7*). Campus budget reports are posted regularly on the campus website (*CFRs 1.3, 1.7*). Fora and town halls provide opportunities for community input and engagement with the administration. The Clery Compliance Team works with campus communications to disseminate timely safety-related information and publishes an annual report.

The Institutional Report, communications with the ALO, and campus interviews provided evidence that CSUSM is committed to honest and open communication with the WSCUC Commission. The institution has abided by Commission policies and procedures (e.g., with substantive change reviews) and has engaged in the reaffirmation of accreditation process with seriousness and candor (*CFR 1.8*).

Standard 2 - Achieving Educational Objectives and Student Success

Degree Programs (*CFRS 2.1 through 2.4*)

CSUSM's degree programs appear appropriate in content, educational objectives, and performance standards and are aligned with associate, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree expectations consistent with the university's mission (*CFR 2.1, 2.2*). Comprehensive information about academic degrees and program requirements is available in the CSUSM catalog and on program webpages. Each program's catalog entry includes details on the program of study, student learning outcomes, career opportunities, preparation requirements, transfer credit guidance, and course descriptions (*CFR 2.1*).

Learning outcomes. CSUSM has established comprehensive Undergraduate Learning Outcomes (ULOs) that foster creativity, empathy, and lifelong learning, as well as Graduate Learning Outcomes (GLOs) that prepare students for leadership roles and meaningful contributions to their fields and society. These outcomes are clearly presented in the catalog and program websites (*CFR 2.2*).

Each degree program has developed Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLOs) designed to yield measurable assessment data and aligned with the institution's ULOs and GLOs. Programs present information consistently, including their mission, learning outcomes, and degree requirements. Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) are also in place for each course and align with PSLOs, ULOs, GLOs, and general education outcomes. It is evident that CSUSM faculty are deeply involved in developing learning outcomes and establishing performance standards for students (*CFR 2.7*). CSUSM has also demonstrated a broad yet thoughtful alignment between the institution- and program-level learning outcomes and its academic policies, as well as the forms of support the university offers to its students to achieve those outcomes (e.g., Academic Advising and the Early Academic Prevention program) (*CFR 2.3*).

Program review. CSUSM has implemented a comprehensive assessment and program review system. In 2025, the Academic Senate and President approved a revised Program Review policy, which

includes an updated timeline requiring each program to complete a comprehensive self-study on a five- to seven-year cycle. This included updating the program review calendar to align with any specialized degree accreditation reviews, which was a positive change communicated to the team during several of the team visit meetings with faculty. Assessment data is collected annually and aggregated to demonstrate how ULOs and GLOs are evaluated, with findings used to inform program-level modifications (*CFR 2.4, 2.7*). CSUSM provided evidence such as the full program review schedule/timeline and samples of annual assessment reports for programs including anthropology (BA), biotechnology (BS), communication (BA), social sciences (BA), liberal studies (BA), literature and writing (MA), public health (MPH), and the MBA program.

Program review at CSUSM is a two-year process involving a faculty-led self-study, multiple phases of internal review, and evaluation by external peer reviewers. The Program Assessment Committee (PAC) is a subcommittee of the Academic Senate with general oversight of all issues related to the processes of program review. Per the CSUSM website, the committee's duties include, but are not limited to: advising programs undergoing review with regard to the program review processes, serving as a liaison among the senate, Academic Affairs, Dean of Graduate Studies, college/library deans, and the programs undergoing review; examining, reviewing, and reporting to the senate with regard to the progress and outcomes of program review and planning processes; and making recommendations to the senate regarding the outcomes of these review processes. The program review schedule was well organized and clearly presented. The curriculum review process for new or revised degree programs appears clear and logically structured (*CFR 2.4*).

A University Assessment Council (UAC) includes assessment representatives from the various degree programs who meet as a forum to share assessment experiences, challenges, and best practices from their own programs. Since AY 2019–2020, the university reports that all programs (100%) have participated in annual assessment activities through direct assessment, program development or

evaluation, or program review (*CFR 2.6*). Given the challenges that CSUSM – and higher education more broadly – faced during this time period, achieving 100% participation in academic program review processes is a notable and laudable achievement.

CSUSM is commended for its comprehensive program review process, including the recent streamlining of that process to align with specialized degree accreditation processes, and the consideration of program review results in academic planning and budgeting (*CFR 2.4*).

General education (GE). The university reported that beginning in Fall 2025, CSU systemwide GE requirements will reflect changes approved by the CSU board of trustees in March 2024, superseding requirements that have been in effect since Fall 2021. CSUSM’s General Education Committee (GEC) provides oversight of all GE program matters, including assessment (*CFR 2.6*). The committee includes representatives from each college, along with administrators, staff, and students, and is responsible for evaluating the GE program, managing academic policies, and ensuring compliance with legislation.

General Education has its own set of nine Program Student Learning Outcomes (GEPSLOs), assessed on a three-year cycle. Since the development of the GE assessment plan in 2015, all nine GEPSLOs have gone through three complete cycles of review. Results are shared with the GEC to evaluate student performance and determine needed actions (*CFR 2.5*). CSUSM provided evidence of GE assessment through a GE curriculum matrix and assessment results from AY 2015–16 through 2022–23, including actions taken across the three-year assessment cycles (*CFR 2.4, 2.5*); however, the visiting team expressed concern that much of the supporting evidence relied heavily on indirect assessment, such as faculty surveys, rather than direct assessment of GE program learning outcomes.

During the team visit, it became clear through several discussions with academic leadership and faculty committees that assessment of the General Education (GE) curriculum at CSUSM appears to reflect a decentralized structure in which GE courses are owned and assessed by individual academic programs rather than as part of a unified GE program. As a result, assessment practices of GE have

tended to be localized and somewhat piecemeal, with primary emphasis placed on course-level evaluation. While GE has long been recognized as a collective program, systematic assessment at the program level remains an identified gap by the university.

As a result, the visiting team recommends that CSUSM develop a formal process for reviewing general education at the program level, incorporating the assessment of general education learning outcomes into that process (*CFR 2.3, 4.1*). Discussions during the team visit reflect a sustained institutional commitment to addressing this challenge, with current efforts directed toward developing a more cohesive framework that evaluates general education as an integrated program rather than a collection of individual courses.

Faculty (*CFRs 2.5 through 2.8*)

Faculty qualifications. CSUSM's faculty have steadily increased in number over the past decade. At the time of the visit, the university employed 310 tenured/tenure-track faculty and 612 lecturer faculty—up from 255 tenured/tenure-track and 463 lecturer faculty in Fall 2015. This represents a 22% increase in tenured/tenure-track instructional faculty and a 32% increase in lecturer faculty (*CFR 2.5*). CSUSM faculty are respected scholars in their fields and actively engaged in research and scholarly activities. They have the capacity and expertise to deliver a high-quality curriculum and to evaluate, improve, and promote student learning and success (*CFRs 2.5, 2.6*).

Faculty involvement in decision making. CSUSM shows a strong commitment to shared governance involving faculty, staff, administration, and students. The Academic Senate—supported by fourteen standing committees—is the primary body through which faculty participate in governance. With approximately 73 faculty serving as academic senators representing all colleges across the university, the senate evaluates and recommends policies and procedures related to academic matters, offers input on budget and long-range planning, and functions as a sounding board for the provost and vice provost. In addition to the campus-wide senate, each college maintains its own governance

structure. These structures include committees that support faculty participation in decisions related to strategic planning, academic policies, curriculum, budget planning, and resource allocation (*CFRs 2.3, 4.6*).

Faculty evaluation. Expectations for tenured faculty regarding research, scholarship, and creative activity are clearly articulated in the university's Retention, Tenure, and Promotion (RTP) Policy. The retention, tenure, promotion, and evaluation processes outline detailed procedures and expectations. Tenured faculty undergoing review submit a Working Personnel Action File (WPAF), which documents accomplishments in teaching, research/creative activity, and service. Reviews are conducted by a peer review committee, the dean, and, when applicable, the Promotion and Tenure Committee. Part-time lecturers also submit a WPAF and undergo periodic evaluation. Faculty Affairs and the Faculty Center provide guidance and support throughout the process (*CFR 2.8*).

Supporting faculty. CSUSM provides workshops and individual guidance to help faculty navigate the retention, tenure, and promotion process. The institution also provides support for faculty professional development (*CFR 2.8, 3.3*). The Faculty Center offers programs and activities focused on teaching, learning, research, and service, including workshops on inclusive pedagogy, research support, and networking. At the faculty forum during the team visit, faculty acknowledged the university offers each faculty member a \$1,000 budget towards professional development. While they are appreciative of this support, they expressed that more financial support towards professional development is needed, including in the area of AI.

For new tenure-track hires, the Faculty Center offers an onboarding program that introduces expectations for tenure-track work, clarifies the RTP process, and highlights resources for research and creative activity. To support lecturer faculty, the senate established the Lecturer Committee in Spring 2021, ensuring representation and support for part-time lecturers within the university community (*CFRs 2.8, 3.3*).

Student Learning and Performance

Mission of student success. CSUSM identifies student success as its core mission, emphasizing retention, progress toward degree, and graduation as key indicators (*CFR 2.10*). As part of the university's 2021 strategic planning process—and in response to a previous visiting team recommendation—the institution updated its definition of student success:

Students succeed when they achieve their own goals, personal, professional and educational, prepared to thrive in diverse environments as resilient and engaged global citizens. We commit to an expansive and holistic approach grounded in equity and social mobility that looks beyond access, retention and graduation to provide seamless, equitable, and effective support for all students throughout their life cycle: from the first point of contact, in the classroom and outside it, through graduation, and beyond.

Over the last five to six years, CSUSM has made significant efforts to implement strategies, resources, and tools aimed at improving student success. These initiatives include expanding student success committees, workgroups, task forces, and project teams; restructuring academic advising; developing resources such as the Early Academic Intervention (EAI) Program and the Academic Resiliency Curriculum; and introducing tools like the Degree Planner module. While these actions represent positive progress, the visiting team noted uncertainty about whether the initiatives are producing the intended outcomes and how the university is assessing their effectiveness (*CFR 2.10*).

Collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs (Cougar Student Life Cycle). The partnership between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs appears strong and well-coordinated. In the 2022–23 academic year, the two divisions launched a joint initiative called the Cougar Student Life Cycle. It aligns student engagement with a stepwise model of student development, beginning with pre-enrollment (as early as middle school), progressing to retention and engagement of students while they are on campus through graduation, and preparing and supporting them for their post-baccalaureate

achievements. The Student Life Cycle encompasses three broad stages (Attract, Transform and Empower, and Advance) and eight steps (Engagement, Recruitment, Application/Admission, Orientation/Enrollment, Studentship, Graduation, Career Preparation, and Alumni). According to the CSUSM website, “understanding the Student Life Cycle helps those charged with creating a sense of belonging and student support service, while creating optimum learning environments.” Administrators also use the life cycle to help with support service analysis, prediction and planning, which can also be used to help design new and creative ways to improve first-year retention and student success. This effort led to the establishment of a working group focused on strengthening collaboration and resulted in the creation of a new position: the Senior Director of the Student Life Cycle (*CFR 2.13*). The visiting team viewed this as a positive development. It was clear during the visit that the university invested significant work in the development of the Student Life Cycle initiative, an effort that included involvement by administrators, faculty, staff, and students, and that it has been well communicated throughout the university academic and student affairs plans.

When the review team met with the Cougar Life Cycle Committee, it observed palpable enthusiasm for the Cougar Life Cycle Model, and learned that the cross-divisional collaboration that dissolved institutional silos has led to more creative, holistic approaches to supporting students before, during, and after their time on campus. To maximize the benefits of this ambitious and layered initiative, the visiting team recommends that CSUSM develop and implement an assessment plan for the Cougar Student Life Cycle initiative that considers impact on student outcomes at each stage of the life cycle, and that provides clear and actionable indicators of organizational effectiveness (*CFR 2.14*).

Graduation rates (*CFR 2.10*). Undergraduate completion rates for first-time students have improved in recent years, but they remain below institutional and CSU systemwide goals. Over the last twelve years, four-year graduation rates for first-time students increased from 11.5% to 25.6%.

Although this improvement is notable, it falls short of the institutional and system-level shared goal of 40%.

The six-year graduation rate increased from 46.5% to 53% during the same period, with a peak of 59% in 2021, still below the CSU systemwide goal of 70% and the national average of 61%. Transfer student graduation rates were reported at 36.8% (four-year) and 71.1% (six-year). The visiting team raised questions about how CSUSM is addressing the low four-year completion rate for first-time students and what strategies might close the gap between current outcomes and systemwide goals. In the open forum with students, several students said that their ability to graduate on time was delayed because required classes often fill up quickly and not enough sections of required courses are offered or only offered one semester per year, forcing them to extend their studies beyond four years. Some transfer students expressed that they were advised incorrectly when they transferred into the program, requiring them to take additional courses that delayed their time to graduation.

Retention rates present a more positive picture. CSUSM reported a 75% retention rate in 2023, slightly below the 2019 pre-pandemic rate of 79%. These figures are consistent with the CSU systemwide average of 82% and the national average for public four-year institutions (78%).

After graduation (CFR 2.11). CSUSM tracks student success effectively after graduation. The university administers the CSUSM Exit Survey twice annually, in both fall and spring, to gather information on graduates' post-degree plans. Additionally, the Labor Market Outcomes Dashboard provides metrics on career trajectories and earnings by undergraduate major. According to the dashboard, CSUSM graduates (first-time and transfer) earn an average of \$54,471 two years after graduation, \$67,656 after five years, and \$81,768 after ten years. These earnings are slightly below CSU systemwide averages of \$56,314, \$71,230, and \$88,128 at the same intervals. CSUSM graduates carry lower median student debt than graduates of peer institutions and the national average.

Student Support (CFRs 2.12 through 2.14)

The visiting team observed that CSUSM is committed to supporting students who face academic and personal challenges. The university offers strong and robust academic and co-curricular support programs and appears to be very proactive in assisting students who may be struggling—many of whom are the first in their families to attend and graduate from college or are from the military. CSUSM has made significant and sustained investments in student development through a wide range of academic support services and co-curricular opportunities (*CFR 2.13*). At the points of admission and enrollment, CSUSM offers a variety of orientations customized to specific groups, such as freshman, transfer, graduate and international students, and parents, to help new students transition smoothly (*CFRs 2.12 and 2.13*).

Regarding graduate students, faculty who met with the team indicated they greatly enjoy working with graduate students and praised students' contributions to their research programs, departments, and the campus community. At present and as they look ahead to increasing the number of graduate programs and their enrollment, faculty expressed concerns about the institution's ability to provide students in graduate programs the quality and quantity of mentoring – including academic advising, graduate thesis supervision, and career/professional guidance – that they require. The key challenge is workload: providing adequate assigned faculty workload to engage in graduate student mentoring while fulfilling their broader teaching, research, and service obligations. For example, in several graduate programs, faculty receive additional load for graduate thesis advisement only after seven of their advisees have graduated. Faculty feel the workload under the current compensation structure has become unsustainable, a situation that will be exacerbated by planned growth in graduate programs. The visiting team therefore recommends that CSUSM leadership take steps to ensure sufficient support for graduate thesis advisement, mentorship and student success (*CFR 2.5, 2.13*).

Academic advising. Upon enrolling in the university, academic advisors work closely with students to help them meet degree requirements. In 2018, CSUSM convened a working group to review

advising practices and develop recommendations for improvement. The group identified several opportunities, including the need to hire more advisors to reduce student-to-advisor ratios and to invest in technologies that support more accessible advising. In response, CSUSM consolidated all staff advising units under the Division of Academic Affairs. This restructuring was intended to promote collaboration across academic programs, strengthen communication with students, and enhance the integration of advising technologies (*CFR 2.14*).

CSUSM offers students resources to be more proactive in their own academic advising via Degree Planner, an interactive online tool that provides students with a visual map of their academic progress and upcoming course requirements. The tool enables students to plan proactively and supports faculty and advisors by predicting course demand, improving resource allocation, and enhancing the quality of advising sessions. The visiting team found that the efforts to improve Academic Advising processes and tools have had positive impacts.

While these are positive steps, it was clear during the team visit that in the current approach to academic advising, the institutions currently has insufficient capacity – that is, available advisors and advising sessions – to meet the needs of CSUSM students. While students appreciated the support they have received from the current team of academic advisors, because of the high student-to-advisor ratios and lack of available advising sessions, many students commented that they were not getting the academic advising they needed to be fully successful. One student said “often there aren't enough advising appointments available for them and the class enrollment period has progressively been getting worse. CSUSM increases their student admittance every semester while decreasing the number of classes. Unfortunately, enrolling for courses is a difficult experience for professors, staff, and students. The ratio between students and advisors/classes is unacceptable and students deserve more academic resources.”

The concerns for sufficient academic advising for students were echoed by faculty and staff in the open forums. With CSUSM's goal to increase enrollment by 2% each year, the visiting team recommends the university continue to work to ensure there is sufficient support for academic advising for students, in line with its plans for enrollment growth (*CFR 2.3, 2.12*).

Academic and co-curricular support programs. Academic support at CSUSM includes a wide range of services such as peer tutoring, embedded tutoring, supplemental instruction, the STEM Success Center, the Writing Center, and NetTutor, which offers expanded virtual tutoring options. The university also provides workshops covering topics such as time management, note-taking, and advanced research techniques (*CFR 2.13*).

CSUSM takes a proactive approach to supporting students who may be experiencing academic difficulty. Through the Early Academic Intervention (EAI) program, faculty can refer students who display signs of struggle—such as poor attendance or low engagement. The EAI team then reaches out to connect students with appropriate resources, offering early, targeted support (*CFR 2.13*). Additionally, through CSUSM's Academic Resiliency Curriculum, students (mainly first year) who have been placed on academic notice are automatically enrolled in a series of one-unit courses with a trauma/counseling focused pedagogy. These courses ask students to reflect on their personal barriers that may have led to their academic struggles and what can they do to progress. According to the university, students who complete these courses are about 20% more likely to improve academically.

Co-curricular support through the Division of Student Life also plays an important role in student success. Resources include the Student Leadership and Involvement Center (SLIC), Veterans and Military-Connected Services, the University Student Union, and various Student Life Centers. The Cougar Care Network (CCN) serves as a centralized hub that connects students with on-campus and off-campus resources to address obstacles that may affect academic performance and overall well-being (*CFR 2.13*). During the team visit, students, faculty, and staff had high praise for the work being done at the Cougar

Care Center and their use of the Cougar Cart taken around the campus each day to inform students about the resources that are available. During the visit, the team learned that referrals to the Cougar Care Center have risen by 58% since the cart was introduced.

The university also provides extensive information about career opportunities in the college catalog. It hosts numerous job fairs and networking events throughout the region, going beyond what is typically included and helping students make informed decisions about their academic paths.

Standard 3 – Assuring Resources and Organizational Structures

Human Resources (*CFRs 3.1 through 3.3*)

CSUSM employs a highly qualified and diverse community of faculty, staff, and administrators who are dedicated to advancing the university’s mission of student success and social mobility, consistent with expectations for sufficient and qualified personnel (*CFR 3.1*). The institution reports a 22% increase in tenured/tenure-track faculty and an 18% increase in staff between 2015 and 2024, reflecting a sustained investment in human capital to support its educational mission (*CFR 3.1*).

CSUSM’s recruitment and hiring processes comply with CSU systemwide policy and demonstrate attention to equity and fairness in hiring, including training for search committees on unconscious bias and equitable hiring practices. All candidates undergo comprehensive background checks, ensuring appropriate vetting and compliance with institutional policies and standards for personnel (*CFR 3.2*).

CSUSM actively supports professional development across all employee groups, aligning with expectations for ongoing development and effectiveness of personnel (*CFR 3.3*). Programs such as the Leadership Academy, Principles of Supervision, and Career Pathways for Administrative Professionals strengthen supervisory capacity and succession planning.

For faculty, the Faculty Center plays a central role in professional development and pedagogy, offering over 80 annual programs and maintaining initiatives such as the New Faculty Institute (NFI) and the Quality Learning and Teaching (QLT) certification, supporting teaching effectiveness and continuous

improvement (*CFR 3.3*). In addition, the Staff Center (established 2020) and the Center for Contemplative Practices (Mindful CSUSM) provide holistic support for staff and faculty well-being, reinforcing the institution's commitment to a "culture of care" and employee support (*CFR 3.3*).

The team finds that CSUSM effectively recruits, retains, and develops qualified personnel to sustain its educational mission (*CFRs 3.1–3.3*). The institution's commitment to faculty and staff well-being exemplifies good practice across the CSU system.

Fiscal Resources and Financial Sustainability (*CFRs 3.4 and 3.5*)

The team finds that fiscal management at CSUSM is transparent, prudent, and aligned with strategic priorities, consistent with expectations for financial planning, stability, and sustainability (*CFR 3.4*). The institution's Budget Office maintains a transparent process that connects budget requests to strategic plan goals as described in *The Power of CSUSM, 2022–2028*, demonstrating alignment between planning and resource allocation (*CFR 3.4*). Regular open forums and campus communications support transparency and community input in financial decision-making (*CFR 3.4*).

The university has successfully diversified its revenue sources, securing major grants and philanthropic gifts, including a \$10 million donation to launch the BS in Public Health (SWIFT Health Programs) and a \$6 million HSI-STEM grant supporting engineering program expansion, reflecting efforts to enhance financial sustainability (*CFR 3.5*). In response to anticipated 3–7.95% CSU systemwide budget reductions, CSUSM has implemented responsible cost-containment measures (e.g., a Voluntary Separation Incentive Program, temporary hiring chill, and a technology refresh pause) while protecting investments in student success, demonstrating prudent fiscal management (*CFR 3.5*).

The University Budget Advisory Committee (UBAC) appears to be well informed and actively engaged in institutional financial planning, reflecting appropriate oversight and shared responsibility for fiscal decisions (*CFR 3.4*). The use of "World Café" demonstrates a commitment to inclusive and participatory budgeting processes. The President's Administrative Team (PAT) was observed to be

cohesive, collaborative, and aligned, contributing to effective institutional decision-making and financial stewardship (*CFR 3.4*). The Institutional Planning & Analysis (IPA) team provides robust data and dashboards that support data-informed decision-making across campus, strengthening planning and resource allocation (*CFR 3.5*).

The institution recognizes the importance of increasing philanthropic support; however, University Advancement currently lacks permanent leadership and a clearly defined strategy, despite an ambitious \$200M campaign goal. This presents a potential risk to long-term financial sustainability and resource diversification (*CFR 3.5*).

Overall, the institution's strong financial audit record and proactive fiscal planning processes demonstrate that CSUSM's fiscal management practices reflect a high degree of integrity, stability, and alignment with institutional priorities (*CFRs 3.4–3.5*).

Physical, Technological, and Information Resources (*CFR 3.6*)

CSUSM has significantly expanded its physical and technological infrastructure since the previous accreditation cycle, consistent with expectations for adequate and appropriate resources to support institutional operations and student learning (*CFR 3.6*). Recent capital projects include the Viasat Engineering Pavilion (2022) and Extended Learning Building (2019), with additional facilities under construction in 2025, reflecting continued investment in infrastructure (*CFR 3.6*).

The Instructional and Information Technology Services (IITS) unit maintains a robust and secure network, supports hybrid learning environments, and resolves an average of over 33,000 annual help desk tickets, demonstrating both reliability and extensive utilization of technological resources (*CFR 3.6*). The implementation of Microsoft Dynamics CRM and the AI-enabled CougarBot exemplifies innovation in student support and engagement, enhancing institutional effectiveness (*CFR 3.6*).

The University Library demonstrates alignment with academic programs through its digital collections and the Cougars Affordable Learning Materials (CALM) initiative, which generated over \$4.6

million in textbook savings in AY 2024–25, supporting equitable access to learning resources (*CFR 3.6*).

The CSUSM Information Technology team is aligned with institutional priorities and is actively preparing for systemwide initiatives related to data standardization and development of a CSU data infrastructure (*CFR 3.6*).

The team finds that these investments directly enhance teaching, learning, and student services, and that the university's proactive use of technology supports equity, access, and student success (*CFR 3.6*).

Organizational Structures and Decision-Making (*CFRs 3.7 through 3.11*)

The team observed that CSUSM's organizational structure and shared governance processes effectively support institutional planning, decision-making, and accountability, consistent with expectations for leadership, governance, and organizational effectiveness (*CFRs 3.7–3.9*). Governance is coordinated through the President's Administrative Team, Academic Senate, and Budget and Advisory Committees, ensuring integration of academic and fiscal planning and supporting institutional effectiveness (*CFR 3.7*).

The university maintains clear reporting lines and consultative decision-making practices, including dual reporting for the Chief Information Officer (to the Provost and Vice President for Finance and Administrative Services) and the elevation of the Chief Diversity Officer to the President's Administrative Team, reflecting intentional organizational design and leadership alignment (*CFR 3.7, 3.9*).

The institution makes extensive use of campus-wide forums, town halls, and data dashboards to promote transparency, communication, and evidence-based decision-making, demonstrating effective leadership and organizational practices (*CFR 3.9, 3.10*). The Institutional Planning and Analysis unit provides dashboards and data tools that support data-informed decision-making across divisions and units, strengthening institutional effectiveness (*CFR 3.10, 4.2*). The WSCUC Steering Committee

demonstrated a well-organized, inclusive, and intentional approach to preparing the institutional report, reflecting institutional capacity for coordinated self-study and reflection (*CFR 3.9, 4.1*).

At the same time, the team observed that while numerous initiatives are aligned with student success (e.g., the Cougar Care Network), these efforts often operate in parallel rather than as part of a fully integrated, institution-wide strategy. Although there is a strong shared commitment to student success, there is less clarity regarding how individual initiatives connect, how they collectively advance institutional goals, and how their effectiveness is assessed using measurable outcomes (*CFR 3.11, 4.4*).

In the area of student success and educational effectiveness, the institution demonstrates a strong culture of care and engagement; however, the team did not consistently observe clear evidence linking specific interventions to measurable improvements in key student success indicators, particularly long-term outcomes such as six-year graduation rates (*CFR 4.3, 4.4*).

The team therefore recommends that the institution strengthen its capacity for data integration across internal and external data sources, and among organizational units, to support more effective use of information for planning, decision-making, and continuous improvement (*CFR 3.10, 3.11, 4.2, 4.4*).

Overall, CSUSM demonstrates many characteristics of an effective and improving institution, including strong leadership, collaborative governance, and a student-centered culture. The institution is well-positioned to build on these strengths by enhancing integration, alignment, and evidence of effectiveness across its initiatives (*CFRs 3.7–3.11*).

Standard 4 - Creating an Institution Committed to Quality Assurance and Improvement

Quality Assurance Processes

Since its last WSCUC accreditation review in 2015/2016, CSUSM has established and/or refreshed several quality assurance initiatives, including the recent (2021-23) development and implementation of a new university strategic plan, and the implementation of strategic plans in Academic Affairs (LAMP), Student Affairs, and Finance and Administrative Services divisions. These are

all crucial components of a comprehensive quality assurance strategy. Given the recent implementation of the university's strategic plan, it is not yet clear how the various strategic initiatives will be integrated to maximize the benefits they should bring to the university (*CFR 4.1, 4.5*).

Strategic planning. Development of a new strategic plan commenced in 2021 and resulted in The Power of CSUSM, a plan that articulates revised vision, mission, and values statements for the university, as well as six specific goals (and key objectives) that are intended to guide the strategic actions of all units within the university. Goals include Achieving our Vision through academic excellence; student success; diversity, equity and inclusive excellence; a culture of care; community partnerships; and a distinctive institutional identity and reputation. While these goals are not unique to CSUSM, they are operationalized in a manner that effectively embodies the vision, mission, and values of the institution, and they were developed via a thoughtful process that sought input from all important stakeholders within the campus and its surrounding community (*CFR 4.8*).

Concurrent with and following the creation of the university's strategic plan, units within CSUSM were charged to develop their own strategic plans to articulate how they intended to support the university's strategic goals. Implementation of the new strategic plan began in 2023, complete with objectives underlying each goal. The plan's implementation is guided by a leadership team that annually ensures that unit action plans align with university goals, monitors progress towards those goals and ensures that budgetary planning and resource allocations are aligned with the university's strategic goals (*CFR 4.6, 4.8*). The Plan in Action (2024) links on the strategic plan's web pages illustrate initiatives and achievements within each goal of the strategic plan. The university's strategic plan has served as an organizing, unifying structure for divisional and college strategic plans, which has allowed university leadership – including the president's administrative team – to identify opportunities for collaboration across units and the prioritize initiatives and resource allocation in response to persistent and/or

emerging needs. This appears to be an immediate and significant benefit of The Power of CSUSM to the university.

Given that several of the strategic plan's goals relate to student retention and graduation (*CFR 4.2*), the team anticipated that the institution would pay greater attention to identifying specific factors contributing to the university's struggles to meet the CSU's Graduation Initiative 2025 graduation goals for first-time and transfer students, as well as identifying ways to address those factors in the future. While significant gains in graduation rates were made during the GI 2025 era, it is clear from the institution's Standard 2 essay that CSUSM is still aiming to improve these critical, institutional indicators of student success.

Academic programs: annual assessment, program review, disciplinary accreditation. CSUSM's academic programs engage in annual assessment activities ("action research") and report on their findings and recommended actions derived from them. Common assessment activities include: measuring progress toward Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLOs); exploring degree roadmaps to identify and address PSLOs and courses with high DFW rates; for graduate programs, reviewing licensure, credentialing, certificate pass rates, or other postgraduate outcomes to identify aspects of grad programs in need of improvement (*CFR 4.3*).

The university's program review process requires program faculty to bring together annual assessment outcomes, other data pertinent to the evaluation of the program, and internal and external reviews to determine the program's educational effectiveness (*CFR 4.6*). The process concludes with a Memorandum of Understanding that connects resource decisions to strategies intended to support and enhance the program's vitality. A similar process is employed for CSUSM's twelve programs that have additional specialized disciplinary accreditation.

The program review process is overseen by the Office of Academic Programs, supported by the dean of academic programs and senior strategic specialist for assessment and accreditation. A revised

version of the University Assessment Council (UAC) supports assessment and program review for all programs at CSUSM; it meets twice per year to share best practices. Colleges and departments provide additional support for their programs with disciplinary accreditation (*CFR 4.3, 4.6*).

The infrastructure described above represents an intentional and robust means of evaluating the quality of CSUSM's academic programs, and should provide important, actionable information to guide the continued improvement of its academic programs (*CFR 4.1, 4.3, 4.6*).

To maximize the benefits of the efforts and resources invested in assessment, the visiting team suggests that program- and unit-level assessment strategies and outcomes be shared more regularly across academic, co-curricular, and administrative units (*CFR 4.3, 4.5*), to not only increase awareness of actions and results across campus, but to share best practices that can benefit other units on campus (*CFR 4.1, 4.6*). Collective assessment findings can then be integrated into the ongoing strategic planning process at the university level (*CFR 4.8*).

Finance and administrative services. Guided by its own divisional strategic plan, CSUSM's Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) division intentionally aligns its annual goals with the institution's strategic plan, emphasizing measurable and impactful goals (*CFR 4.1*). This is illustrated quite clearly by CSUSM's participation in the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) program. The overall impact of CSUSM's participation in STARS appears to be quite positive, as indicated by the elevation of its ratings from Silver in 2017 to Gold in 2020 and 2024. This data-centered initiative has led to enhancements in CSUSM's culture of sustainability (*CFR 4.1*).

The FAS division has two promising initiatives in place that enable it to act on its commitment to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in business operations across campus: the Business Process Improvement Program and Project 3S. By reducing redundancies and infusing an ethic of stewardship into their business practices, CSUSM has "humanized its culture of service." The FAS also utilizes

employee engagement surveys as well as evaluations, consultations, and risk assessments offered by its Office of Internal Audit (OIA) to foster continuous improvement.

What is less clear is how the university has benefited from its Business Process Improvement Plan, Project 3S, and from the employee engagement surveys (*CFR 4.5*). Few specific examples were offered to illustrate the impacts of these well-designed and well-intentioned initiatives: for example, improvements in services or operations resulting from the Business Process Improvement Program, Project 3S, FAS employee engagement surveys, and/or the OIA consultations. It was also unclear whether or how such improvements have enabled CSUSM to make progress toward specific goals articulated in its strategic plan. Integrating the efforts of FAS more fully into oversight and reporting structures associated with strategic planning implementation could enhance CSUSM's capacity to fully leverage the strategic planning process.

Student Affairs. Between August 2023 and February 2025, the Student Affairs division at the university engaged in the development and implementation of its 2025-2030 Student Affairs Strategic Plan (*CFR 4.8*). This plan is aligned with the goals of the university's strategic plan and centers on four primary goals within the division:

- promote student success throughout the student life cycle;
- foster employee well-being and professional growth;
- enhance operations and organizational sustainability; and
- strengthen campus, alumni, and community partnerships.

The Student Affairs Strategic Plan adopted a learning domains framework, offering a clearer focus on student development and preparation for post-graduation success, greater flexibility for departments within the division to meet the needs of students, and stronger alignment with national standards and the goals in the university's strategic plan (*CFR 4.1, 4.3*). In CSUSM's institutional report, specific strategies for achieving the plan's goals were not clear – perhaps because the plan was launched

only recently -- nor is the manner clear through which outcomes from any initiatives driven by this plan will be integrated into broader university strategic initiatives (*CFR 4.5*). During the visit, the team heard from the Student Affairs Leadership Team about numerous noteworthy enhancements to the support CSUSM students now receive (e.g., expanded Title IX / DHR outreach, increased capacity and improved efficiency in scheduling appointments in the Counseling Center, efforts to bring Cougar Care to the students via the use of the Cougar Cart, expanded capability to provide support to students through the COMPASS Center). These efforts could be integrated more formally into the oversight and reporting structures associated with the university's strategic planning implementation (*CFR 4.5, 4.8*).

While the suggestions immediately above pertain to Student Affairs, a recurring theme emerged with respect to CSUSM's university-wide integrated strategic plan and the plans from the university's three divisions. The review team identified a need for the university and its divisions to establish measurable goals and timelines for each initiative in its campus and unit-level strategic plans to facilitate tracking progress toward achieving strategic goals in a more integrated fashion (*CFR 1.2, 4.8*).

Institutional Improvement

The infrastructure at CSUSM that has been assembled since the university's last accreditation review to support its quality assurance and institutional improvement processes has yielded clear, impactful benefits to the university, and promises to offer even greater returns on the university's investments in these units and processes in the years to come (*CFR 4.4, 4.5, 4.8*).

Institutional research and data infrastructure. CSUSM's Office of Institutional Planning & Analysis (IP&A) partners with all university divisions as they engage in data gathering and research designed to enhance each division's and the institution's effectiveness. IP&A is also responsible for maintaining and reporting official campus data internally (via campus reports and dashboards) and externally (e.g., CSU Chancellor's Office, IPEDS, etc.). The institution has increased its investment in the IP&A by enhancing its staffing by approximately 75% since the last accreditation review, while also

coordinating with subject matter experts in IITS and other campus offices to ensure that the appropriate data are being used with integrity and in compliance with its data governance policy (*CFRs 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5*). The IP&A, in concert with an expanding network of campus leaders involved in student success initiatives, plays a central role in enabling this work to be data-informed through its development of university dashboards that complement those that are maintained by the CSU Chancellor's Office. The accuracy and availability of critical indicators of student success, such as credit momentum, retention and graduation rates, time-to-degree, course success (e.g., DFW rates) largely fall under the responsibility of the IP&A (*CFRs 4.2, 4.5*). CSUSM has constructed a robust infrastructure and assembled a skilled IP&A staff to support its culture of data-informed decision-making in the service of student success.

An area for further development relates to how the institution integrates data from across divisions (academic and non-academic) to inform discussions about cross-divisional initiatives. There are also opportunities to strengthen data integration and data sharing with the CSU system office and across CSU system to aid in setting goals, evaluating outcomes, developing and refining strategies, and sharing best practices.

CSUSM's commitment to institutional improvement through data-informed strategies was manifested in strategies the university developed as it engaged in Graduation Initiative 2025 (*CFR 4.5*). Institutional data revealed challenges CSUSM students were facing that threatened their persistence and timely graduation. The Graduation Initiative Steering Committee then developed evidence-based recommendations to address these challenges, such as:

- adopting a 15-units-per-semester standard for all students (and the consequent increase in course offerings and need for enhanced academic support services required to meet this increased standard successfully);

- utilizing the CSU Student Success Dashboard to gain insights into student academic behaviors that impact successful degree completion;
- supporting faculty and staff participation in the CSU Student Success Analytics Certificate Program – a team-based professional development program designed to use data to improve student success.

Concurrently, CSUSM adopted Degree Planner, a years-long accomplishment that enhances the process of course scheduling for all academic departments (including Academic Advising) by providing key data about course demand, allowing the university to more accurately meet students' curricular needs than simply relying on past practices (*CFR 4.3, 4.5*). Degree Planner also enables students to better plan their course of study, semester-by-semester, accurately tracking their own progress toward graduation. During the campus visit, the team learned that vendor support for this tool will be ending soon. As a result, in the not-too-distant future, CSUSM will be installing and implementing a new degree planner tool that should provide even clearer guidance to students through their programs of study. The new tool is also expected to generate more sophisticated demand data and other information regarding gatekeeping courses and degree velocity that will enable the institution to enhance students' curricular experiences, while also streamlining the course scheduling process.

CSUSM's student success organizational structure has evolved since the last accreditation review. This was driven by several factors, including the CSU Graduation Initiative 2025, disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and lasting consequences of its impact on student learning and preparedness for higher education, and the proliferation at the university of student success working groups and task forces in Academic and Student Affairs. In 2024, this led the president to create the position of senior director of the student life cycle, a campus leader who reports to the provost and vice president of student affairs. During the accreditation visit, the team met with the senior director of the student life cycle and the Cougar Life Cycle Committee and learned important details about the purpose

and goals for the life cycle framework, as well as the structures – strategic, tactical, and operational – engaged in this ambitious collaboration between Academic and Student Affairs. This relatively new position promises to benefit the university through the formal oversight and coordination of student success initiatives that it will provide (*CFR 4.5*).

The strategies and practices described above demonstrate a culture and commitment to institutional improvement (*CFR 4.3, 4.5 and 4.6*). The team heard from several administrators that the institution and CSU system would welcome and benefit from having greater capacity to integrate and share data across units, initiatives, and with other CSU campuses, and also to compare their data with information from other sources such as WSCUC. Enhancing data integration capacity could support more effective programmatic assessment, academic, fiscal and strategic planning, and the sharing of best practices at many levels (*CFR 3.10*).

Campus climate. CSUSM surveys its students, faculty and staff using a variety of effective survey strategies. Some surveys (i.e., National Survey of Student Engagement, National College Health Assessment) are standardized, nationally normed surveys, while others are home-grown instruments (i.e., CSUSM Kickstart Survey, Exit Survey). The nationally-normed surveys enable CSUSM to determine how it is fairing compared to similar institutions in the state, region, and nation, while the home-grown surveys allow CSUSM to determine the degree to which various units, services, and programs on campus are meeting the expectations and needs of CSUSM students. These surveys are administered regularly and predictably, while IP&A also conducts surveys (and focus groups) on an as-needed basis in response to unforeseen or emerging needs (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic) (*CFR 4.3, 4.5*).

A campus-wide climate assessment was initiated in 2020, and a new cycle of climate assessment began in 2024-25, in partnership with Ranking Climate and guided by a CSUSM Survey Advisory Council. This again illustrates CSUSM's mature approach to gathering and using data to inform institutional strategies and decision-making (*CFR 4.3, 4.5*).

Title IX also plays an important role in enriching the campus climate at CSUSM for students, faculty and staff. Coordinating with CSU systemwide initiatives designed to address issues of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation based on sex/gender, CSUSM has engaged in campus-centered Title IX/DHR reviews of its campus climate and formal processes, participating in NASPA's Culture of Respect program in 2020 and engaging with TNG Consulting in 2021 to conduct an internal review of its Title IX operations. Findings from these activities, supplemented by a systemwide assessment conducted by Cosen O'Conner in 2022, led to important changes in the campus's Title IX/DHR operations, including revamped processes for handling Title IX, DHR, and other conduct of concern, reorganizing Title IX/DHR office staffing, and the hiring of an Associate Vice President of Title IX/DHR. Through all of these consultative measures, and through what the institution learned from a public Title IX-related incident involving a student complaint against a faculty member, CSUSM has engaged in thorough and well-resourced efforts to strengthen its Title IX/DHR operations (*CFR 4.3, 4.5, 4.8*).

Evidence of successful outcomes to the university's review, reorganization, revision and expansion of its Title IX/DHR office and procedures were provided in a supplemental document (Aggregated Student Complaint Metrics) and discussed with the visiting team in a session with Student Affairs Senior Leadership (SALT) that revealed significant increases in the number of cases that were reported during the past five years. The AVP for Title IX/DHR indicated that the increased case numbers resulted from the public's heightened awareness of Title IX issues due to national attention to these issues, as well as CSUSM's outreach to promote the campus Title IX/DHR policy and reporting procedures. Despite the significant rise in cases, 100% of the cases have been resolved in each of the past five years.

A final, critical component of campus climate at CSUSM is the support it offers to its faculty through its Faculty Center (*CFR 4.6*). CSUSM's faculty center provides a gathering space – including an

outdoor patio and in-door lounge, faculty library and conference room – and online resources to offer mentorship and support to faculty in all aspects of their faculty roles and through all stages of their academic careers. The Faculty Center benefits from full-time, fully-funded leadership in the form of a faculty director and an associate director. Programming in the Faculty Center enhances the pedagogy, research, grant-writing, and mentorship capabilities of all CSUSM faculty members (*CFR 4.3, 4.5, 4.6*).

Subsection C: Reflections – Synthesis of Insights as a Result of the Reaffirmation Process

The team finds that California State University San Marcos demonstrates a strong, mission-driven commitment to student success and social mobility, which is consistently understood and articulated across leadership, faculty, and staff. This shared focus is a defining institutional strength and is reinforced by an engaged and visible president, a cohesive president’s administrative team, and a collaborative academic senate. The institution has cultivated a positive campus climate, with faculty and staff expressing optimism and a sense of alignment with institutional priorities.

The Reflections section of CSUSM’s institutional report describes actions that the institution has taken since its last reaccreditation that relate to each of the four WSCUC standards. Notable among these are: developing a university-wide strategic plan and beginning its implementation; developing unit-level strategic plans in support of the institutional plan; improving and streamlining its program review process; prioritizing employee support and making solid financial decisions during a difficult time for higher education; and continuing to emphasize assessment, quality assurance, and data-informed decision-making.

For the future, CSUSM also acknowledges the importance of continuing to prioritize transparent and strategic financial planning as it adds academic programs and student enrollment; leveraging campus-wide assessment activities, program reviews and institutional research to a greater extent;

further operationalizing its unified, holistic definition of student success; and implementing and coordinating the elements of its various strategic plans.

The team finds that the institution and its leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of the current state of CSUSM, as well as the challenges and opportunities the university faces during the next few years as it continues to move forward in the areas it has identified for improvement and growth.

Subsection D: Compliance with 2023 WSCUC Standards

As described under Subsection B, above, the team has reviewed CSUSM's institutional report and its completed Compliance with 2023 WSCUC Standards worksheet, as well as the supporting documents provided. Overall, the team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to determine compliance with each of the four WSCUC Standards. Final determination of compliance with the Standards rests with the Commission.

Section III – Other Topics, as Appropriate

The team found no additional topics or issues to be addressed.

Section IV – Commendations and Recommendations

COMMENDATIONS

The Team commends California State University San Marcos for the following:

1. Its clarity of mission and sense of purpose as a university committed to student success and social mobility, the extent to which these are embraced by faculty, staff and students as a point of pride, and the ways these are embedded in strategic planning and decision making at all levels.

2. Its program review process, including the recent streamlining of that process to align with specialized degree accreditation processes, and the consideration of program review results in academic planning and budgeting.
3. Its culture of transparency in communications and inclusive, data-informed decision-making.
4. Its understanding of the student populations it serves, and its intentionality in designing academic programs and modes of delivery to meet the needs of the community and regional workforce.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The team recommends California State University San Marcos:

1. Establish measurable goals and timelines for each initiative in its campus and unit-level strategic plans to facilitate tracking progress toward achieving strategic goals in an integrated fashion (*CFR 1.2, 4.8*);
2. Develop a formal process for reviewing general education at the program level, incorporating the assessment of general education learning outcomes into that process (*CFR 2.3, 4.1*);
3. Develop and implement an assessment plan for the Cougar Life Cycle initiative that considers its impact on student outcomes at each stage of the Cougar Life Cycle, and its impact on organizational effectiveness (*CFR 2.14*);
4. Ensure sufficient support for student academic advising, in line with plans for enrollment growth (*CFR 2.3, 2.12*);
5. Ensure sufficient support for graduate thesis advisement, mentorship and student success (*CFR 2.5, 2.13*);
6. Increase capacity for data integration across internal and external data sources, and among organizational units, to support the effective use of information for campus and system-level initiatives (*CFR 3.10*).

Appendix A: Federal Compliance Forms

1. Credit Hour and Program Length Review Form

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the Comments sections as appropriate.)
Policy on credit hour	Is this policy easily accessible? ☒ YES ☐ NO If so, where is the policy located? <i>In University Catalog: https://catalog.csusm.edu/content.php?catoid=9&navoid=1302</i> Comments: <i>Complete policy in policy database: https://csusm.policystat.com/policy/8009017/latest</i>
Process(es)/ periodic review of credit hour	Does the institution have a procedure for periodic review of credit hour assignments to ensure that they are accurate and reliable (for example, through program review, new course approval process, periodic audits)? ☒ YES ☐ NO If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? ☒ YES ☐ NO Comments: <i>As per the policy: "In its review of course proposals, the University Curriculum Committee shall use the CSU definition of the credit hour to determine whether the number of units being awarded for each course is consistent with the expectations of student learning."</i> <i>"Academic Programs will regularly sample the collected course syllabi to see that they contain the required statements communicating to expectations of student effort. Any syllabi that are found not to include these statements will be reported to the chair/director of the department/program/school offering that course to follow-up with the instructor to ensure that this information is contained in future syllabi."</i>
Schedule of on-ground courses showing when they meet	Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours? ☒ YES ☐ NO Comments: <i>Full course schedule is not posted/printed given the institution's online tools. However, a search of the schedule shows meeting times conform for all classes: https://www.csusm.edu/enroll/enrollment/fall_2025/index.html</i> <i>Approved course meeting times also indicates classes meet the prescribed number of hours: https://www.csusm.edu/acdsched/scheduling-files/approved_mtg_times/approved_meeting_times_022619.pdf</i> <i>Office of Academic Scheduling provides tools for departments to audit meeting times, and then Academic Scheduling does a final audit: https://www.csusm.edu/acdsched/audits/hoursperweek_audit.html</i>
	How many syllabi were reviewed? 6

Sample syllabi or equivalent for online and hybrid courses
Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.

What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)? <i>Both</i>
What degree level(s)? ☐ AA/AS ☒ BA/BS ☒ MA ☒ Doctoral
What discipline(s)? <i>BS/BA: Biology; Literature & Writing</i> <i>Master's: MA in Sociology; MBA</i> <i>Doctoral: Educational Leadership (only current doctoral program)</i>
Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? ☒ YES ☐ NO
Comments: <i>Sample syllabi here: Syllabi Examples CSUSM</i> <i>Syllabi examples provided were reviewed and found to be in compliance.</i>

Sample syllabi or equivalent for other kinds of courses that do not meet for the prescribed hours (e.g., internships, labs, clinical, independent study, accelerated)
Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.

How many syllabi were reviewed? <i>NA</i>
What kinds of courses?
What degree level(s)? ☐ AA/AS ☐ BA/BS ☐ MA ☐ Doctoral
What discipline(s)?
Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? ☐ YES ☐ NO
Comments: <i>All courses follow credit hour policy regardless of type – e.g. accelerated course meeting times are adjusted to conform to policy.</i>

Sample program information (catalog, website, or other program materials)

How many programs were reviewed? <i>As per Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations, all baccalaureate degrees must have 120 units (with limited exceptions that CSUSM does not have), and master's degrees must have at least 30 units. Hence, all the degree programs at the institution comply.</i>
What kinds of programs were reviewed? <i>All programs comply, across all four colleges.</i>
What degree level(s)? ☐ AA/AS ☒ BA/BS ☒ MA ☒ Doctoral
What discipline(s)? <i>Each discipline is in compliance.</i>
Does this material show that the programs offered at the institution are of a generally acceptable length? ☒ YES ☐ NO
Comments: <i>Given there is state law (Title 5) governing program length, all degree programs are in compliance.</i>

Review Completed By: Peter Senkbeil
Date: March 27, 2026

2. Marketing and Recruitment Review Form

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's recruiting and admissions practices.

Material Reviewed	Questions and Comments: Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this table as appropriate.
**Federal regulations	Does the institution follow federal regulations on recruiting students? X YES ☐ NO Comments: <i>No system of incentive compensation exists at CSUSM.</i> <i>The team finds that CSUSM's marketing and recruitment materials are accurate, accessible, and aligned with institutional mission and values. The university's recruitment practices comply with federal and CSU systemwide regulations.</i> <i>The university maintains clear, publicly accessible information about admissions criteria, academic programs, tuition and fees, and financial aid. The Scholarships at CSUSM site clearly outlines eligibility, deadlines, and application processes.</i>
Degree completion and cost	Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? X YES ☐ NO Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? X YES ☐ NO Comments: <i>The Degree Planner - https://www.csusm.edu/enroll/services/degreeplanner.html - is a tool that students use to plan their academic progress so they see what the time to degree will be based on their course requirements and number of courses they are able to take each term.</i> <i>Cost of attendance is on the website - https://www.csusm.edu/finaid/costofattendance/index.html</i> <i>The cost of attendance webpage provides itemized details on tuition, housing, transportation, and personal costs.</i>
Careers and employment	Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? X YES ☐ NO Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable? X YES ☐ NO Comments: <i>Institutional Planning & Analysis has reports on post graduate outcomes - https://www.csusm.edu/ipa/campus-data/postgraduate-outcomes.html</i>

*§602.16(a)(1)(vii)

**Section 487 (a)(20) of the Higher Education Act (HEA) prohibits Title IV eligible institutions from providing incentive compensation to employees or third-party entities for their success in securing student enrollments. Incentive compensation includes commissions, bonus payments, merit salary adjustments, and promotion decisions based solely on success in enrolling students. These regulations do not apply to the recruitment of international students residing in foreign countries who are not eligible to receive Federal financial aid.

Review Completed By: Samuel Sudhakar
Date: March 25, 2026

3. Student Complaints Review Form

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's student complaints policies, procedures, and records.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Policy on student complaints	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for student complaints? X YES ☐ NO If so, is the policy or procedure easily accessible? Is so, where? Complaints and Concerns Dean of Students Office CSUSM Comments: <i>CSUSM provides multiple avenues for students to file complaints, depending on the nature of the issue. The Dean of Students Office is the central hub for student advocacy and complaint resolution. Complaints are handled under systemwide policies such as Executive Orders 1097 and 1098.</i>
Process(es)/ procedure	Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? X YES ☐ NO If so, please describe briefly: <i>Table on webpage provides more specific types of complaint reporting, resolution, and links to CSUSM policies and procedures where they exist.</i> https://www.csusm.edu/dos/advocacy/complaints.html If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? X YES ☐ NO Comments:
Records	Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? X YES ☐ NO If so, where? <i>Maxient case management system</i> Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? X YES ☐ NO If so, please describe briefly: <i>The Maxient case management system allows for tracking and monitoring over time.</i> Comments: <i>Maxient is CSUSM's internal platform for tracking student complaints, especially those involving conduct or policy violations. Student complaint records are maintained in accordance with FERPA and are overseen by the Dean of Students. Public-facing resources (catalogs, policies, and web pages) explain how complaints are filed, processed, and documented, but do not expose individual records due to privacy laws.</i>

*§602-16(1)(1)(ix)

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission's Complaints and Third Party Comment Policy.

Review Completed By: Paul Holliday
Date: March 25, 2026

4. Transfer Credit Policy Review Form

Under federal regulations*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's recruiting and admissions practices accordingly.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Transfer Credit Policy(s)	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for receiving transfer credit? X YES ☐ NO If so, is the policy publicly available? x YES ☐ NO If so, where? Admission and Application - California State University San Marcos - Modern Campus Catalog™ Does the policy(s) include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education? X YES ☐ NO Comments: <i>In addition to the section of the catalog that describes the criteria regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher learning, the same section also includes a description of the acceptance of non-traditional credit. The CSUSM website also includes a page that delineates credit accepted from the Joint Services Transcript for military students. Credit for Military Service (ACE-Recommended Military Credit) Office of the Registrar CSUSM</i>

*§602.24(e): Transfer of credit policies. The accrediting agency must confirm, as part of its review for renewal of accreditation, that the institution has transfer of credit policies that--

1. Are publicly disclosed in accordance with 668.43(a)(11); and
2. Include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education.

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission's Transfer of Credit Policy.

Review Completed By: Peter Senkbeil

Date: March 27, 2026

Appendix B: Distance Education Review Form

SECTION A: For institutions with approved distance education programs

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Programs and courses to be reviewed

- Criminology and Justice Studies, BA
- Cybersecurity, BS
- Cybersecurity, MS
- Educational Administration, MA
- Nursing, RN-BSN
- Public Health, MPH
- Reading, Language and Literacy, MA
- Social Work, MSW
- Sociology, BA
- Speech-Language Pathology, BS
- Speech-Language Pathology, MS
- Wildfire Science and the Wildland Urban Interface, BS

2. Background Information

FTE Enrollment in Distance Education Courses/Programs:

- See Table 1, below. Distance education FTE has grown steadily since 2020, with over 30% of total student FTE enrolled in at least one distance education course in 2025.

History of Offering Distance Education:

- CSUSM began offering online and hybrid courses in the early 2010s, with significant expansion during the COVID-19 pandemic. The university continues to grow its online offerings in response to student demand and strategic planning.

Percentage Growth in Distance Education Offerings and Enrollment:

- Distance education offerings have increased by over 50% since 2020, with corresponding growth in student enrollment.

Platform/Formats/Delivery:

- Canvas LMS with robust Instructional Information Technology Services (IITS) support; synchronous and asynchronous modalities; proctoring options; integrated student services delivered online.

3. Nature of the review

Material to be Examined:

- Institutional Report
- Federal Compliance Forms
- Sample syllabi
- Program catalogs
- Policy documents

Persons/Committees to be Interviewed:

- WSCUC Steering Committee
- Academic Programs
- Instructional Information Technology Services (IITS)
- College Deans
- Program Directors and Faculty
- Extended Learning

Lines of Inquiry	Institution responds to questions and provides links to evidence (materials should be exhibits in appendices)	Review Team members enter findings and recommendations as appropriate
<i>Fit with Mission.</i> How does the institution conceive of distance learning relative to its mission, operations, and administrative structure? How are distance education offerings planned, funded, and operationalized?	CSUSM's commitment to social mobility and access is advanced through intentional online pathways that serve nontraditional learners, including "stopped out" adults balancing work and family. The Power of CSUSM The fully online degree programs at CSUSM are offered through Extended Learning where there is a robust infrastructure to operationalize online learning. EL offers these fully online programs in a self-support model where the program tuition funds the operation teams in EL: admissions, evaluations, programming, marketing, outreach and finance. This model fits into the overall mission and strategic plan of CSUSM as it provides access to an education to students who may be just outside of the commuting range, as well as students needing online flexibility. This, in turn, aligns with CSUSM's goal of being national leader of social mobility as more college graduates are conferred.	Based on the institutional materials and the onsite visit, the team finds that CSUSM's distance education (DE) programs are well aligned with the institution's mission, particularly its commitment to student success, access, and social mobility. The DE programs expand access to students who are unable to attend campus due to geographic, professional, or personal constraints, including working adults and nontraditional learners. This is consistent with the institution's stated goal of increasing educational attainment and advancing social mobility.
<i>Connection to the Institution.</i> How are distance education students integrated into the life and culture of the institution?	Online students access advising, library resources, tutoring, counseling/health services (including telehealth), career services, EOP/DSS accommodations, and community programming. Integration strategies include virtual orientation, streaming of campus events, support for online clubs/organizations, and communications tailored to online audiences through improved web pages	The team finds that CSUSM has implemented multiple strategies to ensure that distance education students are integrated into the life and culture of the institution, consistent with its commitment to student success and belonging. During the visit, both faculty and students indicated that intentional engagement practices—such as

	and an online student services landing page. Weeks of Welcome and Commencement information are made accessible online. Efforts focus on fostering online community and clarity in program communications (e.g., admission to stateside vs. EL online tracks).	synchronous sessions, virtual check-ins, and informal “firechats”—help foster a sense of connection to the institution. Faculty were described as proactive in building relationships with online students, and students reported feeling supported and connected to their instructors and peers.
<i>Quality of the DE Infrastructure.</i> Are the learning platform and academic infrastructure of the institution conducive to learning and interaction between faculty and students and among students? Is the technology adequately supported? Are there back-ups?	The LMS is robust and supported by IITS, with regular audits and technology backups. Faculty and students receive training and support for online learning. LMS Training and Support for students and faculty	The institution’s distance education infrastructure is robust and reliable. The Canvas LMS is cloud-hosted, providing high availability and stability, and is supported by IITS with appropriate training, backups, and technical support. Instructional designers support faculty in implementing effective pedagogical practices and engagement strategies, contributing to a high-quality online learning environment.
<i>Student Support Services:</i> What is the institution’s capacity for providing advising, counseling, library, computing services, academic support and other services appropriate to distance modality? What do data show about the effectiveness of the services?	Advising, counseling, library, and computing services are available online. Effectiveness is monitored through student surveys and assessment data. The university is well equipped to provide comprehensive support services for students engaged in distance learning programs. Advising, counseling, library, and computing services—as well as academic support—are readily accessible to all students, regardless of their location. Students may connect with these departments through multiple channels, including online, phone, email, or video conferencing using platforms such as Teams or Zoom. This multi-layered approach ensures that students receive timely assistance and access to resources necessary for their academic success. The institution continually invests in technology and staff training to maintain high-quality support for students in a distance modality.	While services are comprehensive, the team found limited evidence of systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of these services specifically for distance learners

<i>Faculty.</i> Who teaches the courses, e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct? Do they teach only online courses? In what ways does the institution ensure that distance learning faculty are oriented, supported, and integrated appropriately into the academic life of the institution? How are faculty involved in curriculum development and assessment of student learning? How are faculty trained and supported to teach in this modality?	The faculty teaching in our fully online degree programs are a mix of full-time and part-time instructors. Faculty teaching in online programs are part of academic departments reporting to their respective department chairs and adhere to the same policies and guidelines of all other faculty on campus. When exploring and developing new online programs, faculty go through the same curriculum development steps for all programs, and the program is assessed and evaluated by several campus senate committees. Additionally, faculty teaching in fully online programs are provided with professional development training (Developing Effective and Quality Online Courses), on designing and delivering their online courses. Quality Learning and Teaching opportunities	The team found that faculty teaching in distance education are not siloed or separated from the academic enterprise, but rather remain actively engaged in curriculum development, program review, and assessment of student learning through established shared governance processes, including Academic Senate committees and departmental oversight. During the visit, faculty described a high level of commitment to engaging online learners, often going beyond minimum expectations to ensure student interaction and connection. Faculty also benefit from a 3/3 teaching load, which supports sustained engagement with students but may have implications for balancing teaching, research, and service responsibilities.
<i>Curriculum and Delivery.</i> Who designs the distance education programs and courses? How are they approved and evaluated? Are the programs and courses comparable in content, outcomes and quality to on-ground offerings? (Submit credit hour report.)	CSUSM faculty take the lead in designing online courses and programs with support from various departments across campus. Online courses meet credit hour policy and are comparable in outcomes and quality to on ground offerings; departments articulate modality guidance to ensure discipline appropriate pedagogy.	The team found that distance education courses are comparable to on-ground offerings in terms of content, learning outcomes, and academic expectations. During the visit, faculty and academic leaders affirmed that online and on-ground programs are held to equivalent standards, and that curriculum decisions remain firmly grounded in faculty governance.
<i>Faculty Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction.</i> How does the institution ensure compliance with the federal expectation for “faculty-initiated, regular and substantive interaction”? How is compliance monitored? What activities count as	Regular and Substantive Interaction is embedded via direct instruction, structured feedback, facilitated discussions, scheduled touchpoints, and interactive learning activities. Expectations are explicit in syllabi and course shells. Departments and Academic Programs monitor RSI through syllabus reviews, QLT artifacts, and Canvas activity analytics. Instructors proactively engage based on monitoring (e.g., outreach triggers for low activity/performance).	The team finds that CSUSM has established clear expectations and structures to ensure compliance with federal requirements for faculty-initiated, regular and substantive interaction (RSI) in distance education courses. During the visit, faculty demonstrated a strong commitment to engaging students in the online environment and often exceeded minimum expectations for interaction.

student/instructor substantive interaction”?		Students reported that they experienced frequent and meaningful engagement with instructors, contributing to a sense of connection and academic support.
<i>Academic Engagement.</i> How does the institution ensure compliance with the federal expectation for “Academic Engagement”? How is compliance monitored? What activities contribute to academic engagement?	Academic engagement is ensured through active participation in synchronous and asynchronous activities, assignments, assessments, and interactive tutorials. Monitoring leverages LMS analytics and instructor oversight with timely interventions.	The team finds that CSUSM has established appropriate structures and practices to ensure compliance with federal expectations for Academic Engagement in distance education. During the visit, students and faculty described frequent opportunities for meaningful participation, and faculty demonstrated awareness of their responsibility to monitor and promote engagement throughout the course.
<i>State Licensure Requirements.</i> Describe, as appropriate, the institution’s process for disclosing to students how state licensure requirements are met by distance education programs, whether licensure requirements are not met by programs, or whether the institution has not determined where licensure requirements are met by the programs.	Disclosures regarding state licensure are provided to students in relevant programs, with information available on program websites and in the catalog.	The team finds that CSUSM has established processes to disclose state licensure requirements to students enrolled in distance education programs, in alignment with federal expectations. However, during the visit, the team found limited direct evidence demonstrating how consistently these disclosures are updated, monitored, and communicated across all applicable programs, particularly as licensure requirements vary by state and may change over time.
<i>Student Identification Verification and Privacy.</i> What is the institution’s process for student verification, e.g., a secure login and pass code; proctored examinations; other technologies or practices that are effective in verifying	Identity is verified through secure single sign-on, passcodes, and approved proctoring services. Cybersecurity protocols follow IITS standards for both internal and any outsourced systems. Any additional charges associated with verification/proctoring are disclosed at registration and on course syllabi; equity reviews guide technology selection and accommodations.	The team finds that CSUSM has implemented appropriate processes to verify student identity in distance education courses and programs, consistent with federal requirements. The team found that the institution discloses any additional costs associated with identity verification (e.g., proctoring fees) at the time of registration or within course materials, allowing students to

student identification? What precautions are taken by the institution to protect technology from cyber security intrusions on its or outsourced systems? Are additional student charges associated with the verification of student identity disclosed at the time of registration or enrollment?		make informed decisions. The institution also appears to consider equity and accessibility when selecting verification technologies and implementing related practices. While processes are in place, the team found limited evidence of systematic, institution-wide review of the effectiveness and consistency of identity verification practices across all programs and courses.
<i>Retention and Graduation.</i> What data on retention and graduation are collected on students taking online courses and programs? What do these data show? What disparities are evident? Are rates comparable to on-ground programs and to other institutions' online offerings? If any concerns exist, how are these being addressed?	The institution tracks retention/graduation for online cohorts and compares against on-ground programs and peer online offerings. Initial analyses show comparable rates, with targeted interventions addressing any modality related disparities. See <i>Headcount, Retention, and Graduation Rates for Undergraduate Transfer Cohorts in Fully Online Self-Support Programs</i> in Table 2, below.	The team finds that CSUSM collects and monitors retention and graduation data for students enrolled in distance education programs, including cohort-based tracking and comparisons with on-ground programs and peer institutions. These data are used to evaluate student success outcomes and to identify potential disparities across student populations and instructional modalities. However, it was not consistently clear how these data are used at the program and institutional levels to drive systematic improvements and resource allocation decisions.

<i>Student Learning.</i> How does the institution assess student learning for online programs and courses? Is this process comparable to that used in on-ground courses? What are the results of student learning assessment? How do these compare with learning results of on-ground students, if applicable, or with other online offerings?	Assessment of student learning mirrors on ground processes (program learning outcomes, course assessments, closing-the-loop reports). QLT aligned design emphasizes intentional interactivity over “correspondence” formats. Results inform continuous improvement, with periodic external benchmarking. Assessment Processes	The team finds that CSUSM assesses student learning in distance education programs through established institutional processes that are comparable to those used in on-ground programs. Assessment is grounded in clearly defined program learning outcomes (PLOs) and course-level student learning outcomes (SLOs), which are evaluated through assignments, exams, projects, and other direct measures of student performance. The team found that assessment processes for online courses mirror those used in face-to-face instruction, ensuring consistency in expectations, rigor, and evaluation standards across modalities. Faculty and academic leaders indicated that learning outcomes are intended to be equivalent regardless of delivery format, and that curriculum and assessment practices are aligned accordingly. However, while processes are well established, the team found limited direct evidence demonstrating comparative results of student learning outcomes between online and on-ground students, including: - Systematic comparisons of achievement of learning outcomes across modalities - Aggregated results at the institutional level - External benchmarking against peer institutions or other online programs It was also not consistently clear how assessment results for distance education are aggregated and used at the institutional level to inform continuous improvement across programs.
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<i>Contracts with Vendors.</i> Are there any arrangements with outside vendors concerning the infrastructure, delivery, development, or instruction of courses? If so, do these comport with the policy on <i>Agreements with Unaccredited Entities</i>?	Vendor relationships for LMS tools, proctoring, and instructional technologies follow CSUSM procurement standards and WSCUC guidance. Agreements undergo review to ensure academic control, data privacy/security, accessibility, and alignment with Agreements with Unaccredited Entities policy. Procurement	The team finds that CSUSM utilizes external vendors to support aspects of its distance education infrastructure, including learning management systems, proctoring services, and instructional technologies. These arrangements are governed by institutional procurement processes and policies, which include review for compliance with data security, accessibility, and academic standards. During the visit, there was no evidence to suggest that external vendors have inappropriate influence over curriculum or instruction. However, the team found limited direct evidence of systematic, ongoing evaluation of vendor performance and effectiveness across all distance education services.
<i>Quality Assurance Processes:</i> How are the institution's quality assurance processes designed or modified to cover distance education? What evidence is provided that distance education programs and courses are educationally effective?	Quality assurance processes are in place for distance education, including regular review of syllabi, program outcomes, and student feedback – just as with face-to-face courses. Assessment Processes	The team finds that CSUSM has established quality assurance processes for distance education that are aligned with those used for on-ground programs, ensuring consistency in academic standards and continuous improvement. During the visit, the team observed that faculty, instructional designers, and academic leaders are actively engaged in maintaining quality in online programs, and that course design emphasizes intentional interaction and engagement rather than passive delivery. However, while multiple quality assurance components are in place, the team found limited evidence of a fully integrated, institution-wide framework that aggregates and evaluates the effectiveness of distance education programs as a whole

Table 1.

Students in Fully Online Degree or Credential-Seeking Programs by Academic Plan and Enrollment Term									
Program Type	Degree Type	Academic Plan	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023	Fall 2024	Fall 2025	5Y Change	1Y Change
Undergraduate	BA & BS	Crim & Justice Studies BA	1	1	54	74	78		
		Cybersecurity BS				25	52		
		RN to BSN	126	112	112	113	117		
		Sociology BA	189	179	188	157	144		
		Speech-Language Pathology BS	6	35	28	31	34		
		Wildfire Sci & Urban Inter BS	38	43	40	51	60		
		Total	360	370	422	451	485	34.7%	7.5%
2nd Bachelor's	BA & BS	Crim & Justice Studies BA			2	2	2		
		Cybersecurity BS					1		
		RN to BSN	45	31	40	47	37		
		Sociology BA	3	3	1		2		
		Speech-Language Pathology BS			5	1	5		
		Wildfire Sci & Urban Inter 2BS	2	1	2	3	1		
		Total	50	35	50	53	48	-4.0%	-9.4%
Master's	MA, MPH, MS, MSW	Cybersecurity MS	33	33	24	29	34		
		Education - Administration	26	24	29	25	26		
		Mult-Ling/Cultr Ed MA	37	37	33	37	32		
		NS Educ-Reading_Lang&Lit	30	35	45	52	50		
		Public Health - Global Health	35	43	26	31	40		
		Public Health - Hlth Pro & Ed	66	49	53	70	70		
		Social Work - 3yr MSW			30	61	96		
		Speech-Lang Path MS		17	35	34	19		
		Total	227	238	275	339	367	61.7%	8.3%
		Credential	Credential	Pre Admin Svcs Cred Tier 1Pre	5	8	5	8	9
Reading & Lit Ldrshp Spclst				1					
Total	5			9	5	8	9	80.0%	12.5%
Total			642	652	752	851	909	41.6%	6.8%
Source: PeopleSoft data from RaDAR data warehouse (IP&A Student Term View)									
Note: Fully online status determined by Student Campus = Extended Learning Online or Academic Plan = Mult-Ling/Cultr Ed MA									

Table 2.

Headcount, Retention, and Graduation Rates for Undergraduate Transfer Cohorts in Fully Online Self-Support Programs							
	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023	Fall 2024
N	27	103	145	112	139	156	183
1 Year Retention	89%	82%	81%	88%	88%	83%	81%
2 Year Graduation	63%	73%	62%	70%	77%	69%	
3 Year Graduation	78%	77%	74%	78%	84%		
4 Year Graduation	78%	78%	77%	81%			
Source: Official ERS retention data maintained by Institutional Planning & Analysis, combined with PeopleSoft data to identify campus/site							

Names of reviewers: **Samuel Sudhakar & Peter Senkbeil**

Date of review: **March 27, 2026**

Appendix C: Off-Campus Location Review Form

A. Information provided by the institution:

1. Site Name and Address

CSUSM at Temecula Campus
43890 Margarita Road, Temecula, CA 92592

MSJC Temecula Valley Campus
41888 Motor Car Parkway, Temecula, CA 92591

2. Background Information (number of programs offered at this site; degree levels; FTE of faculty and enrollment; brief history at this site; designation as a branch campus or additional location by WSCUC)

Number of Programs Offered:

CSUSM at Temecula offers a BS in Business Administration, a 2+2 collaborative BS in Business Administration with Mt. San Jacinto Community College, an accelerated BS in Nursing, and a BS in Software Engineering (2024).

Degree Levels:

Bachelor's degrees (BS, BA).

FTE of Faculty and Enrollment^[1]:

Temecula/MSJC				
Term	Faculty headcount	FTEF	Enrollment	FTES
Summer 2025	8	1.7	468	31.2
Fall 2025	22	5.8	578	38.5
Spring 2026	16	4.4	431	28.7

^[1] Since programs at this location are offered through self-support, FTES and FTEF calculations are not regularly used for budget or staffing.

Brief History at This Site:

The idea for a CSUSM presence in Temecula emerged in the mid-2000s in response to rapid regional growth and the need for public higher education in Southwest Riverside County. In 2007, CSUSM began working with local leaders to open an off-campus center in Temecula, notably without the use of state funds. This was made possible through innovative partnerships with the City of Temecula, business leaders such as Paul Garrett, and \$470,000 in private donations.

By 2010, CSUSM at Temecula relocated to a larger facility—the former Joan F. Sparkman Elementary School on Margarita Road. This move was supported by a \$1.6 million redevelopment grant from the City of Temecula and additional support from the City of Murrieta. The new 18,000-square-foot space included eight classrooms, a student lounge, a biology lab, a kinesiology training room, and two mock hospital rooms with state-of-the-art simulation mannequin.

In August of 2022 CSUSM entered into an agreement with MSJC to offer programs and courses at MSJC's Temecula Valley Campus (TVC). CSUSM shifted the BS in Business Administration program to the new TVC site since this program is a 2+2 program with MSJC for their Associate Degree graduates to seamlessly enter into our Business degree completion program. Additionally, CSUSM received about \$5.5 million in funding through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), via Riverside County to support an expansion of curricular offerings, as well as administrative needs for both of the Temecula sites. The ARPA funds also carved out about \$800k to allow us to launch a BS in Software Engineering program at TVC to expand pathway programs within the region.

Designation:

Additional Location

3. Nature of the Review (material to be examined and persons/committees to be interviewed)

Material to be Examined:

Institutional self-study, program review reports, compliance forms, syllabi, student support documentation, and evidence of quality assurance processes.

Persons/Committees to be Interviewed:

Site administrators, Program Director(s) and faculty, student support staff, students, and relevant university committees.

B. Evidence provided by the institution. Findings and recommendations entered by the review team.

Lines of Inquiry	Institution provides links to evidence (materials should be exhibits in appendices)	Review team members enter findings and recommendations as appropriate
<i>For a recently approved site.</i> Has the institution followed up on the recommendations from the substantive change committee that approved this new site?	NA	
<i>Fit with Mission.</i> How does the institution conceive of this and other off-campus sites relative to its mission, operations, and administrative structure? How is the site planned and operationalized? (CFRs 1.1, 3.1, 3.6, 4.1)	CSUSM's mission is centered on student success, social mobility, and regional engagement. Off-campus sites are explicitly designed to expand access and meet local workforce needs, as outlined in the Long-range Academic Master Plan (LAMP) and strategic plan.	The 2+2 MOU with Mt. San Jacinto College (MSJC) provides a truly seamless transition into the CSUSM programs located at the Temecula Valley Campus. Students praised the ease of the transfer process. Students also appreciated the convenient access to desirable programs offered at the TVC site that allowed them to pursue a degree while also managing their work and/or family responsibilities.

<i>Connection to the Institution.</i> How visible and deep is the presence of the institution at the off-campus site? In what ways does the institution integrate off-campus students into the life and culture of the institution? (CFRs 1.5, 2.10, 4.3)	The Temecula site is managed by CSUSM, ensuring institutional presence and integration	Academic advisors at the TVC campus regularly communicate with students about support services and other university resources available to them at the San Marcos campus (or virtually), including in-person and online events (e.g., job fairs, speakers, etc.). On-site staff are present every day that the facility is operating, and the Extended Learning leadership either work on or visit the Temecula campuses regularly.
<i>Quality of the Learning Site.</i> How does the physical environment foster learning and faculty-student contact? What kind of oversight ensures that the off-campus site is well managed? (CFRs 2.5, 3.1, 3.6)	The Temecula campus features a human performance laboratory, nursing skills and simulation labs, and a distance learning center. The facility was designed to meet the workforce needs of the region and provide a high-quality educational environment.	The former elementary school that is now the Temecula Campus has been skillfully re-purposed for the regional-serving nursing program, including state-of-the-art nursing skills and simulation labs, a biology lab, and a kinesiology training room. A program director, faculty, technicians, and support staff maximize the use of the building year-round as new cohorts commence every term (including summer) at the site. The TVC site, managed by MSJC, offers modern, inviting classrooms and comfortable gathering spaces for students on their own designated floor in the building. Students have access to the MSJC dining commons on the first floor of the building. At the TVC site, faculty and staff expressed concerns about a lack of on-site IITS support. They have experienced a few technical challenges (e.g., loss of internet connectivity) that impacted instruction. And while rare, the events were distressing to faculty and staff.
<i>Student Support Services.</i> What is the site's capacity for providing advising, counseling, library, computing services and other appropriate student services? Or how are these otherwise provided? What do data show about the effectiveness of these	The Temecula campus provides a variety of student services, including academic advising, financial aid, and career development. There is a guaranteed 2-year time to graduation for undergraduate degrees, and the site boasts a 97% graduation rate for degree students. Students have access to the CSUSM University	The visiting team's observations confirm the university's narrative. Students praised the support they received from their academic advisors, and were satisfied with the online resources available to them.

services? (CFRs 2.12, 2.13, 2.14, 3.6, 3.10, 4.1, 4.3)	Library's services, both on-site and remotely, including research/course guides and Library Reserves. Additional support includes the Writing Center, STEM Success Center, Supplemental Instruction, and NetTutor, all available in the Extended Learning Building, which serves Temecula students as well.	
<i>Faculty.</i> Who teaches the courses, e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct? In what ways does the institution ensure that off-campus faculty is involved in the academic oversight of the programs at this site? How do these faculty members participate in curriculum development and assessment of student learning? (CFRs 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 3.1, 4.6)	Courses at the Temecula site are taught by CSUSM faculty, including full-time, part-time, and adjunct instructors. Faculty are involved in curriculum development and assessment, following the same standards as the main campus. Faculty hiring and evaluation are governed by university-wide retention, tenure, and promotion policies, ensuring consistency and quality across locations.	The visiting team's conversations with faculty confirmed that the faculty, as on the San Marcos campus, are responsible for the oversight of the programs offered at the Temecula campuses. Assessment of student learning occurs within the same curricular review processes that are utilized on the San Marcos campus.
<i>Curriculum and Delivery.</i> Who designs the programs and courses at this site? How are they approved and evaluated? Are the programs and courses comparable in content, outcomes and quality to those on the main campus? (CFR 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 4.2)	The Temecula site offers the same rigorous curriculum as the main campus, with programs designed and regularly reviewed through CSUSM's curriculum and program review processes.	The academic programs offered at the Temecula campuses were designed through the curriculum development processes established and conducted on the San Marcos campus. Faculty – both tenure-track and lecturer – are responsible for the delivery of the curriculum. The majority of the tenure-track faculty at the Temecula campuses also teach at the San Marcos campus, as do some of the lecturers.
<i>Retention and Graduation.</i> What data on retention and graduation are collected on students enrolled at this off-campus site? What do these data show? What disparities are evident? Are rates comparable to programs at the main campus? If any concerns exist, how are these being addressed? (CFRs 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5)	The Temecula site has a guaranteed 2-year time to graduation for undergraduate transfer students. Retention and graduation rates at the CSUSM Temecula Campus are higher and time-to-degree shorter than for the general population of CSUSM transfer students. This is largely attributed to the cohort model, where students progress together through a prescribed set of classes each semester. The smaller campus	The cohort model employed at the Temecula campuses is yielding tangible benefits to students, not only with respect to the elevated graduation rates, but also with how it enhanced the quality of their experience in their respective programs. Students commented on how they appreciated the social connectivity and informal peer support systems that arose from the cohort structure of the programs. And, they strongly recommended that the programs at the TVC be marketed more broadly to students in the service region,

	environment allows the advising team and faculty to build closer relationships and offer more personalized support to students. As a result, students benefit from increased engagement and guidance, contributing to their academic success and timely graduation. The combination of structured coursework and enhanced faculty-student interaction allows for a supportive educational experience. (See Table 3).	emphasizing the benefits of the cohort model employed at that campus.
<i>Student Learning.</i> How does the institution assess student learning at off-campus sites? Is this process comparable to that used on the main campus? What are the results of student learning assessment? How do these compare with learning results from the main campus? (CFRs 2.4, 2.7, 2.9, 2.11, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5)	Student learning outcomes are assessed annually for all programs, including those at the Temecula site. Assessment results inform program improvements and are overseen by the University Assessment Council and Program Assessment Committee.	The assessment processes for programs at the TVC are the same as those that occur on the San Marcos campus, but the visiting team did not see outcomes specific to the Temecula campuses beyond the graduation rates that exceed those for students (on average) at the San Marcos campus. It was not clear to the visiting team if assessment results were disaggregated for the Temecula sites. If they are not, the team suggests that this practice be instituted.
<i>Quality Assurance Processes:</i> How are the institution's quality assurance processes designed or modified to cover off-campus sites? What evidence is provided that off-campus programs and courses are educationally effective? (CFRs 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6)	CSUSM's program review, annual assessment, and accreditation processes ensure educational effectiveness at all sites, including Temecula	Faculty attested that the processes involved in program assessment at the Temecula campuses are the same as those employed on the San Marcos campus; no modifications have been made for the off-campus sites. Additionally, programs at the Temecula campuses with disciplinary accreditation (e.g., Nursing, Business Administration) meet those accreditors' standards as well.

Table 3.

Headcount, Retention, and Graduation Rates for Undergraduate Transfer Cohorts at Temecula location

	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023	Fall 2024
N	57	60	71	43	16	11	24
1 Year Retention	86%	90%	90%	81%	94%	91%	100%
2 Year Graduation	70%	68%	75%	65%	88%	73%	
3 Year Graduation	81%	75%	85%	86%	88%		
4 Year Graduation	82%	78%	85%	86%			

Source: Official ERS retention data maintained by Institutional Planning & Analysis, combined with PeopleSoft data to identify campus/site

Review Completed By: **Dale Grubb & Paul Holliday**

Date: **March 25, 2026 (site visit conducted on March 17, 2026)**